



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

NURSING AND THE ART OF MEDICINE¹

BY W. S. THAYER, M.D., HON. F.R.C.P.I.

Late Brigadier General, M.C., U. S. A.

It is not as one filled with affectionate remembrance and stirred by the inspiration of direct association with a large figure in the medical world, that I am here this evening. It was not my good fortune to work personally with Miss Delano. Indeed, we met but once, and then quite incidentally, at a gathering of the Committee of the Council of National Defense, but the memory of a fine, strong, earnest face remains.

It is rather as a sincere witness to the value of that which she represented,—of that to which she gave her life; of the influence which the nurse, as exemplified by Miss Delano, exercises on the practice of medicine and on the public; of what the nurses whom she and her friends helped to select, have done in this war, that I am now before you.

Miss Delano's life was given largely to the education of the trained nurse. She and the colleagues with whom she so wisely surrounded herself during the last several years of her life, represented a group of women who are to-day the right arm of the medical profession, that branch of the medical profession (and I use the word advisedly, for a trained nurse is a member of the medical profession in its broadest sense),—on which depends the practice of some of the most vital parts of our art.

From all time woman has stood by the bedside of the sick and the wounded. Why? Because her sphere has been at home while man has been called to the strife and the driving activities of life abroad? In part, perhaps, but that is not all. The prime reason has been that woman has done this task better. She has always done it better and, I venture to say, she will always do it better.

The discoveries which are giving to the practice of medicine a surer scientific basis, are teaching us at the same time how essential is that which we call the "nursing" of the patient. The perfection of our methods of nursing has been one of the greatest advances of the last hundred years of medicine. The surgeon must still bandage and dress his wounds, and the physician *should* still be able to bathe and dress, to massage, manipulate and care personally for his patient, but much of this he can never do so well as does an experienced woman. Moreover, in daily life his functions carry him from house to house,

¹ Read at a meeting in memory of Jane A. Delano, in Philadelphia, May 7, 1919.

and limit the moments he can spend at the bedside. The patient, if he is to receive the attention that he requires, must be watched and cared for by one who is efficient and experienced, understanding and coöperative. True efficiency in the care of the patient at the bedside is to be learned only by experience and by practice. Love alone cannot supply it; gold alone cannot buy it.

Understanding can be acquired only by instruction, study and well directed observation; coöperation, only through a thorough realization that the practice of nursing is an integral part of the practice of medicine, as inseparable from the art of practice as are diagnosis and prognosis and advice. Generally it is the most important element of treatment.

Medical practice becomes daily more complicated, for disorders of the human mind and body are not simple things, and as we know more we are finding ever more ways in which we may be of service.

Our methods of diagnosis are more numerous and more time-taking; and the gain may not always be apparent; but we cannot neglect them for we know how many lives are saved by the early detection of disease and the initiation of proper prophylactic measures. And then the details of the care of patients are much more complicated than they were, for we have come to know that by these procedures we save life and invalidism and mental and physical anguish.

Beyond a few specific measures, such as the employment of the antitoxin for diphtheria, the treatment of myxœdema, and prophylactic vaccination against typhoid fever, the greatest advance in the practice of medicine in the past century has been the development and standardization of the art of nursing, toward which such noble work has been done by the group of women among whom Miss Delano was a leader.

The contribution of the trained nurse to the art of medicine is difficult to overestimate. The sympathetic touch, the dexterous hand, the gentle presence of woman, that is much, yet that is not new. But to have always in the sick-room, one taught to observe and record accurately; one educated and practised in the methods of antisepsis and asepsis; one who has, through supervised practice, proved herself an adept in the art of attending to the wants and comforts of the invalid, with the least disturbance and inconvenience, and the least exhaustion to him; one who is familiar with all ordinary medical and surgical appliances and procedures and mechanical methods of treatment; one who has, as a result of years of experience in a well planned course, acquired a real knowledge of the significance of symptoms; one on whose moral character and influence one may

depend as surely as is possible in the case of the woman who passed under the supervision of the leaders of nursing in this country,—these are incalculable gains. The physician or the surgeon who knows what the trained nurse means to the practice of medicine feels helpless without her. Her functions are wholly complementary to his. Without the nurse, the proper practice of the art of therapy is inconceivable.

The profession of nursing is laborious and wearing. It demands health and youth and strength. The years of practical activity of a nurse are relatively few. But to be a trained nurse demands more than mere bodily strength. It demands intelligence and education well above the ordinary, and stability and strength of character. Relatively few women are adapted to the career of a trained nurse.

The relations between nurse and patient are such as often to be fraught with obvious danger. It is the inestimable contribution of that fine body of women who, in England and America especially, constitute and have constituted the superintendents of our well organized training schools, to have demonstrated that, under women of character and ideals, the selection and education of nurses may be so organized, so standardized, that these dangers are reduced to an almost negligible minimum.

Only tried women are suitable to go out into nursing and especially into army nursing. No better proof of this can be found than the prejudice which existed in 1898 among many excellent medical officers of the army, against the introduction of the trained nurse regularly into the army service. These officers could not conceive the presence of attractive young women among the somewhat rough boys of the army without complications and scandal. This prejudice still persisted among some army officers after twenty years. No more brilliant vindication of the character of the trained nurse could be imagined than the universal chorus of tribute of to-day, tribute not only to the courage, the loyalty, the efficiency of the work of the army nurse in America and France, but to the uplifting, stimulating, refining influence that these women exercised upon officers and men.

Silly, idle, unhealthy-minded, careless-tongued busybodies will start gossip which readily spreads, and such rumors have been spread about the nurses in France, among others. Let me beg of you one thing,—if any such rumors reach you, and you desire an answer, ask the "doughboy" who has passed weary hours in an army hospital, but unless you wish to stage a tragedy, don't tell him who told you!

I remember well the conditions of the Spanish War. I remember the fine work done by nurses; but I remember also the difficulties, the anxieties and the obstacles in the way of those who endeavored to

maintain the standards of the service, and to show to the medical corps what nursing in the army might and should be.

Twenty years later, in considerable measure through the efforts of Miss Delano, the beginning of the present war found an army nursing corps well established, and a Red Cross Reserve, gathered under her supervision, to which fell the main burden of the nursing in France and in America. Thirty-five thousand nurses were enrolled in the Red Cross. Nearly eleven thousand regular and reserve nurses served in France alone. The anxieties and the danger of the voyage these women bore as calmly, and often more so, than the men. To their work in France I can testify as one who was among them. I saw them under all conditions. In the hurriedly improvised camp hospital of the crowded base port, and in isolated points in the base sections; in spots removed from all that was interesting and stimulating, where, at times, refined women had to sleep crowded together, twenty or thirty in a rough, open ward, without privacy, with the crudest and most insufficient sanitary arrangements, exposed continually in damp, rainy weather, with mud so deep that one could navigate only in rubber boots. I saw them in half-finished base hospitals in the Vosges, under like conditions, in the bitter northern winter, where with fingers and toes numb and blanched with cold, one nurse had almost to care for a whole ill-heated ward. I saw them work day in and out without rest, without recreation, in the darkened wards by night, and the fog and rain by day, and bear the strain every bit as well as men. I saw them in field hospitals behind the lines, in areas not infrequently bombed at night and sometimes by day. I saw them go to the front for service in evacuation or field hospitals, as members of teams formed for the care of the wounded suffering from shock, at points shelled by day and bombed by night; in dugouts when off duty but exposed to all the dangers of war when at work. They served without fear, without flinching, without complaint. But one murmur did I hear, and this a murmur and not a complaint, a regret that it might not be given to them to share more fully the duties and the responsibilities at the points of greatest danger. Wherever they went they brought order and cleanliness, and system and contentment and peace. Ask the "doughboy" what it meant to him to find himself at last in a ward presided over by a nurse. Try to say a light word about a nurse to a "doughboy" who has been under her care!

Several instances may illustrate the influence and efficiency of the nursing service in France. Not infrequently it fell to me to visit a certain field hospital, temporarily immobilized, about eight miles behind the lines, in a region not infrequently bombed by aviators. It was a sorry looking place. In old, dingy barracks, with little iron

French cots, and a sadly insufficient personnel—for it was never possible for the medical corps to obtain its full equipment—lay boys with coughs and colds, and bronchitis, and pneumonia, and occasionally the gassed; and in other wards were cases of meningitis and diphtheria, with only untrained orderlies to look after them. Alas, order and cleanliness were impossible to obtain with all the struggles of the medical officers. Then one day, on another visit, I stepped into the same wards to find everything changed, the floors clean, the bed clothes in order, the patients looking rested and happy,—it was almost a miracle. A few army nurses had arrived upon the scene and straightway everything was transformed.

Some weeks later, the division surgeon, a fine medical officer of the old order, said to me: "Colonel Thayer, all my life I have opposed the introduction of nurses into the army, but I want to tell you that my experience of the last few weeks has entirely changed my opinion, and if I can succeed in arranging it, I propose never to be without them again." A few days after that, I met the surgeon of the division which was moving into that sector, and asked him as I left the office if there were any way in which I could assist him. He replied immediately: "Indeed you can, if your influence is of any value in keeping the nurses in field hospital No. X. Col. Y. tells me that he is going to take them with him, and unless I can get a new group it will be simply impossible properly to carry on the work."

What the nurse was to the wounded and ill officers and men individually, it would be difficult to express. This was shown in their letters to those at home. It fell to the officers to censor the letters of the patients; and with unfailing regularity, by the time the second or third letter home was written, there were expressions of touching and undying gratitude to the nurses. For these nurses and for the other American women working with the Red Cross and like societies, there was nothing that the convalescent soldier would not do.

One more touching incident,—one of my friends stopped one day by the bedside of a severely wounded man who was just beginning to turn the scale toward recovery. As the patient looked up at the surgeon he said: "You know, Colonel, the first thing I knew, the first thing I saw when I opened my eyes, was a nurse in a white apron bending over the bed; and then, you know, I just knew it was all right, and I shut my eyes again and went to sleep." He "just knew it was all right"—and so it was, wherever they were, God bless them!

To the cause of the sound education of the nurse, and the extension of her sphere of activity in relation not only to hospitals and to private practice, but to the broader fields of public hygiene and sanitary instruction, Miss Delano gave much of her life.

She lived to see nursing generally recognized as an indispensable complement to the practice of medicine, as it must one day be recognized as an integral part of the art of therapy; she lived to see the trained nurse universally regarded and employed as a vital agent in measures of public sanitation throughout the civilized world.

To the affiliation and coördination of the important nursing agencies of the country, to the end that under the American Red Cross there might be established a force of nurses properly selected and organized, adequate not only for the demands of peace, but for the emergencies of war, she gave the latter years of her life. It was work well done.

She lived to see the standards of nursing for which she stood, recognized by the government. She lived to see the nursing agencies of America united and coöperating with the Army and the Red Cross. She lived to know that the Red Cross was ready, and to realize that it had given to the army a contingent second to none in the service, in character, in morale, in organization, and in efficiency. She lived to see that the American Army Nurse had stood the test. She gave her life freely and unreservedly to a noble service. She accomplished that which she undertook. She died at the height of her powers, at work.

She was a fine figure, the figure of an American Nurse.

NURSES' HOME OF THE PHILADELPHIA GENERAL HOSPITAL

BY LORETTA ROBINSON

Student Nurse

Six months' occupation of the enlarged Nurses' Home of the Philadelphia General Hospital has shown its adequacy in furnishing a home and a school for over three hundred nurses without allowing either office to conflict with the other. As a home it has met the psychological, social and practical needs of the nurses, and as a school it has proved to be ideally constructed and equipped for instruction and demonstration. It is decidedly unique in the emphasis placed on education, since one of the five stories of the new home is devoted entirely to that use. This fact must be noted as a stride in the direction of higher standards of nursing education, which demand that a student nurse must be really a student, and not merely an apprentice at a trade.

The new home, completed in December, 1918, is like the old, to which it is joined, in exterior architecture and material, and is so